DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 003 IR 020 073

AUTHOR Gaffney, Maureen, Ed.
TITLE Museum Programs.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 17p.
AVAILABLE FROM Media Center for Children, Inc., 3 West 29th Street, New York, NY 10001 (write for price; quantity discounts available).
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)
JOURNAL CIT Young Viewers Magazine; v3 n1 Spr 1980

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Early Childhood Education; Elementary Education; Evaluation Criteria; Family Involvement; Filmographies; *Films; Hispanic Americans; Learning Activities; *Learning Motivation; Media Selection; *Museums; Nonschool Educational Programs; Program Descriptions; Program Development; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS Film Festivals; Film Reviews; Informal Education; Media Appraisal; *Museum Collections; PF Project

ABSTRACT

Designed for media specialists and educators, this issue includes five articles exploring the contributions of children's films to museum programs. Following a brief editorial encouraging the use of films in museums, the first article outlines a picture storybook model for evaluating children's films. Several storybook models are identified, and a sample evaluation is offered. The second article describes a study in which four groups of Hispanic children aged 3 to 12 were surveyed to evaluate quality, interest level, and problems of films targeted for this ethnic group. The third article outlines the development of a "discovery tour" program which uses films and activities to stimulate children's interest in museum art collections. The fourth article reviews a 3-day workshop on programming children's films in museums. A list of films is included. The final article describes a family film festival sponsored by a 1979 conference of the Media Center for Children. Films included in the 4 hour screening of animations, documentaries, and extraordinary stories are reviewed. (LP)

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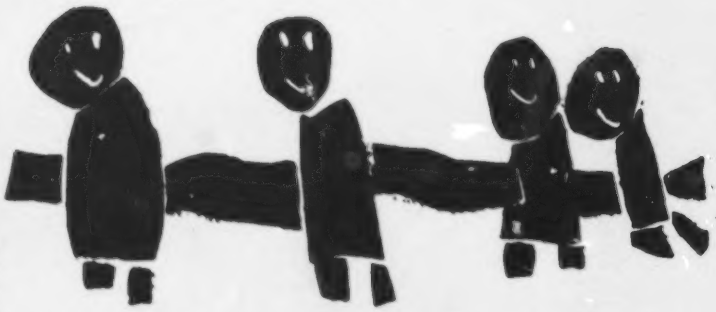

young viewers

Spring 1980 Issue

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Spring 1980 Issue (Volume 3, Number 1)

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Cover artwork is from Maurice Sendak's In the Night Kitchen/Coloring Book (New York: Harper & Row, 1970). The artwork on page three is from the same publication. The illustrations on page four have been reproduced from William Nicholson's Clever Bill (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977). The illustration on page five has been reproduced from the film LUMAAQ: AN ESKIMO LEGEND (National Film Board of Canada, 1975) which was directed by Co Hoedeman and derived from the drawings of Davitialuk Amituk, a Povungnituk Eskimo from Northern Quebec. The photograph on page seven is a reproduction of "The Council Chamber" by Edward Burne Jones, from the collection of the Delaware Art Museum.

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editorial

Typically, when museum educators talk about film, one of three questions arises. The first involves the issue of using film at all. The others are concerned with whether to use film "as an end in itself" or "as a means to an end". This debate always surprises me because I believe that with children film can and should be used both ways. How one uses film depends on the type of film, the particular audience -- including the size and age range of the group, the programmer's relationship to the audience, and his/her goals in showing films in the first place. A museum educator working with a small group of children can develop a program that is quite different from what s/he would do with a mixed group of several hundred parents and children.

When Media Center staff began incorporating arts activities into our film testing procedures with children, we discovered that the activities gave many of the films meaning -- a meaning, particularly for abstract or experimental films, which children could not get from viewing alone, or any combination of discussion and viewing. This approach to film use has particular importance for children because the activity we call play is, for them, a primary mode of learning.

While much of MCC's work involves using film with activities, we also exhibit film programs without activities. (The family film festival on page fourteen is one example.) Perhaps it would be best to say that these are programs without structured activities, since the discussions that arise between siblings or between parent and child after a film screening are activities, too.

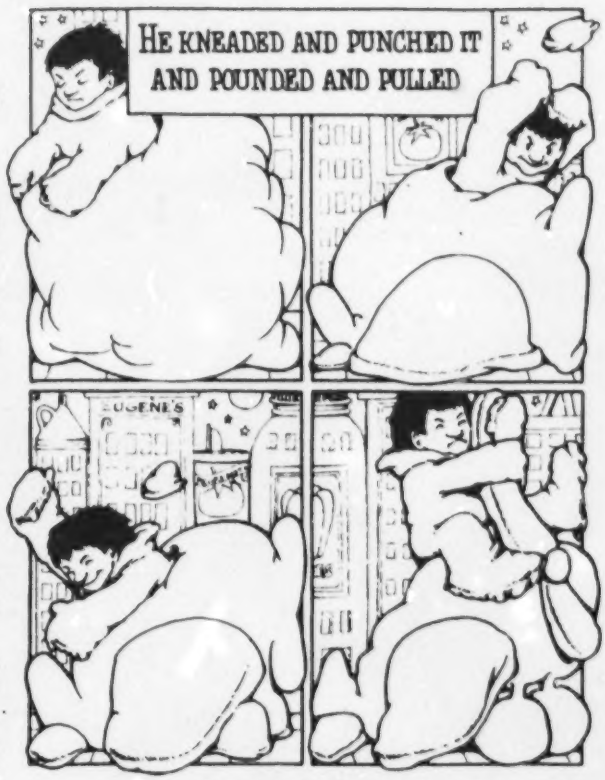
In response to the first question mentioned above, "why film?", I hope the articles in this issue will demonstrate that film can add dimension to a museum program. They can bring the animals and peoples in a natural history museum "back alive" and they can engage children's senses and imaginations in an art museum and motivate them to take a good look at paintings and other art objects.

M.G.

story, synthesis, sequencing:

a picture storybook model for evaluating children's film

by richard gaugert



from the book In the Night Kitchen

When can a children's film be called good? Assuming there is such a genre as children's film, made by filmmakers willing to marshall their energy and imagination towards a target audience of children, how are we to determine if these works are worthwhile? What, in short, are the criteria for evaluating children's films?

When a film such as Tom Davenport's HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION -- or Co Hoedeman's LUMAAQ: AN ESKIMO LEGEND -- is shown for adult evaluation, discussion is likely to focus on the appropriateness of the story for film, and of the film for children. But neither concern addresses the main issue: is the film itself any good? The question of appropriateness for children should not be asked until it has been determined that the film is good as a work of art. No matter how relevant or timely its theme, no matter how interesting its technique, if a film fails as art why would we want to encourage children to sit through it?

The adult evaluator of children's film may feel lost in cliches, old cinematic debates, and useless critical language. However, there is a recognized art form for children in which the fusion of images and words is much akin to a film's marriage of image and sound, and for which evaluation criteria already exist. This art form is the picture storybook which has been around since at least 1878 and Randolph Caldecott. I think that a study of this art form might help us develop criteria for evaluating children's film.

The correspondence between the picture storybook and film is hardly a new idea. Writing in a journal of children's literature in 1946, Hilda van Stockum contrasted giants of English book illustration, such as Walter Crane, John Tenniel, Kate Greenaway, and Leslie Brook, with Randolph Caldecott's lively interpretations of nursery rhymes:

> "Whereas the other artists have all left me with a legacy of definite, stationary pictures.....I don't remember any particular picture of Caldecott's. But at the sound of his name, as to the tune of a Pied Piper, a procession of little figures comes dancing past -- horses with red-coated riders, shaggy dogs, loving couples, children, kings, queens, dishes, and a cow jumping over the moon. So I have come to the conclusion that Caldecott provided me with my first movies."[1]

Some contemporary illustrators of picture storybooks have also commented on the correspondence of their medium to cinema, especially if, like Maurice Sendak and Gerald McDermott, they have worked in both. Blair Lent had had experience with both mediums when he turned his picture storybook, Why the Sun and the Moon Live in the Sky, into a film. Lent comments that an illustrator "thinks in terms of close-ups and long shots, movement and dialogue, almost the same way a filmmaker does."[2]

But how can a picture storybook be considered a model for developing criteria to evaluate children's films? The term itself is instructive; a picture storybook is more than an illustrated book which is a term for any text with illustrations added to supplement or decorate the words. The term is deliberately more specific than picture book, a category that includes alphabet and concept books, in which illustrations clarify or explain the words. The key word is story; a picture storybook is a medium of storytelling. As such, the standards for evaluating narrative line -- theme, character, setting, plot -- can and should be applied to any evaluation of the picture storybook. The uniqueness of this art form is that the standards for evaluating the narration apply equally to the text and to the illustrations that compliment the words.

Filmmakers must give equal attention to how a film looks and sounds. Likewise, the creator of a picture storybook must concentrate on how the words will look when joined with appropriate illustrations. In fact, the fusion between words and illustrations is so complete that neither alone tells the entire story; the art and the text must work together to create an experience that is more than a sum of the parts. In describing this fusion of art and words, Maurice Sendak says that the pictures must be "organically akin to the text".[3]

In her survey of American picturebooks, Barbara Bader remarks that as an art form the picture storybook "...hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning of the page."[4] It is in this pattern of sequencing, what Bader calls "the drama of the turning of the page", that we must clearly see a correspondence between the picture storybook and cinema.

Literary Models

Perhaps the best example of a cinematic picture storybook is Maurice Sendak's In the Night Kitchen (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), for which Sendak admits a debt to Winsor McCay and the Little Nemo films. In this book, Sendak's illustrations are framed by heavy black lines and plenty of white space; frequently, he drew two to four frames to a page. A tangible sense of movement occurs as the pages are turned and the frames whizz by. It takes Mickey nine frames, spread over six pages, to get from his pajamas in bed to his birthday suit in the kitchen. Then the pace slows down; there is one frame per page, like an establishing shot, and even a couple of double-page spreads, before the pace zooms on with Mickey piloting his bread dough airplane to the stars.

In the Night Kitchen has not yet been made into a film; in many respects, it already is one. The cinematic quality of the book is not, however, totally unique. Its format is really an extension of the picture storybook format pioneered by Randolph Caldecott and perfected in William Nicholson's Clever Bill (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977) which originally appeared in 1926. Sendak's descending Mickey and Nicholson's clever Bill, running frantically across the countryside to meet his mistress' train, are really brothers under the skin.

Both books are marked by their perfect synthesis of text and illustration and their superb sequencing. Yet, while Nicholson's drawings are as liquid as the cursive script he uses for telling Bill's story, Sendak's illustrations are pristine cartoons. In talking about Clever Bill, Sendak has remarked that while Nicholson's works are "...seemingly so simple, they run through your fingers, you can't catch them fast enough."[5]

In the Night Kitchen and Clever Bill can be evaluated on the basis of three criteria: story, synthesis, and sequencing. Both works have lively characters, interesting settings, believable conflicts plotted to satisfying resolutions, engaging illustrations brilliantly executed, and an ability to prompt in the reader a pleasant sense of having moved or been moved. Only when we analyze our reading experience do we realize that the words in both books merely outline the plot. The illustrations, not the text, introduce us to the characters and describe the settings, and the sequencing of the illustrated pages actually tells the story. Both picture storybooks are so tightly constructed that story, synthesis, and sequencing cannot be evaluated separately.

In the Night Kitchen and Clever Bill are unique in this respect; only a few picture books manage to combine story, synthesis, and sequencing so effectively. Still, the three criteria are important in evaluating the picture storybook as an art form. Synthesis need not be achieved by literally joining the words to the illustrations as in In the Night Kitchen, or by hand drawing them as in Clever Bill. Effective synthesis can be said to occur whenever the illustrations perfectly compliment the text and add meaning and vitality to it.

Applying the Model to Film

The triple-S criteria, story, synthesis, and sequencing, can be instructive in evaluating a film such as LUMAAQ: AN ESKIMO LEGEND (National Film Board of Canada, 1975), which is a black and white animation by Co Hoedeman. LUMAAQ was translated directly from oral tradition to film with the help of an Eskimo graphic artist and an Eskimo storyteller. A printed introduction identifies the film's theme: "A snow-blind boy is cruelly rejected by his own mother. For the wrong she does him, he takes revenge." The first need for a good story -- theme -- is thus satisfied at the outset; LUMAAQ is a story of revenge. It has three characters, all quickly introduced in the film's images: a mother, distinguished by her decorative face markings; a boy whose eyes are closed; and a young girl who is always shown as being smaller in height than either mother or brother. The setting is the North country, Northern Quebec, and the action takes place initially in an igloo.

The story unfolds as the mother describes how she used to ride the great seals underwater. Suddenly, there is a noise outside the igloo; a hungry bear is looking for food. The family dog approaches the bear and barks at it. Meanwhile, the snow-blind boy reaches for his bow and shoots an arrow through an opening in the igloo walls. The arrow hits the bear and kills it; but, lying, mother tells her son that he has killed the dog. Later, mother and daughter retreive the dead bear, skin it, and cut up its meat for food -- food which the mother will not share with her unseeing son.

The seasons change and the young man, deserted now by his mother and sister, sleeps naked in a melting igloo. Two enormous loons fly by and discover through conversation with the boy that he cannot see. They have compassion for him and magically, by throwing him into the water, restore his sight. The boy seeks out his mother and discovers her lie when he sees the bearskin on the

from the book Clever Bill

wall of her summer hut. Rather than confronting her, though, the boy pretends he is still blind and asks his mother's assistance in harpooning a seal. She ties a rope which is attached at the other end to his harpoon around her waist, and together they go to the water's edge. The boy hits a large seal, and because the rope is tied to her waist his mother is given a perilous underwater ride on the seal.

This concluding sequence, the mother's ride on the swiftly swimming seals, had been foreshadowed by her "story" in the opening scene. Both sequences are effectively used under the opening and closing credits.

The film includes a flashback or fantasy sequence (the mother's opening story) as well as a magical fantasy sequence (when the loons shove the boy into the water). The two hunting sequences, the early one of killing the bear and the later one of preparing to kill the seal, give the film a sense of visual balance and an emotional spur to keep viewers watching to discover how it all turns out -- the filmic equivalent of "the drama of the turning of the page".

Synthesis has been well handled. LUMAAQ has an imaginative soundtrack that perfectly compliments the primitive Eskimo images. There is minimal conversation in the Inuktituk tongue, silence when there is rejection, and discrete sound effects, such as the splashing of water when the boy regains his sight. Occasionally, there is the instrumental sound of a solo mouth harp. No part of the soundtrack dominates the images; rather, sounds have been used subtly to compliment them.

LUMAAQ is a challenging film and may be difficult for some groups to follow. It is best shown after an introduction to a small-sized group, with time allowed for discussion and a second screening. But, structurally, it is nearly a perfect film. It begins with a strong story, incorporates a soundtrack that compliments the images, and uses sequencing creatively to retain interest. On the one hand, we can use the picture storybook criteria -- story, synthesis, and sequencing -- as a guide to evaluating the film; on the other hand, film lovers can glory that LUMAAQ would never make as good a book as it does a film. Has any book ever captured the sound of splashing water?

from the film LUMMAQ

1 Hilda van Stockum. "Caldecott's Pictures in Motion", The Horn Book Magazine, March-April 1946 (Vol. 22, No. 2), pp. 119-125.
2 Blair Lent. "There's Much More to the Picture than Meets the Eye", Wilson Library Bulletin, October 1977 (Vol. 52, No. 2), pp. 161-4.
3 Nat Hentoff. "Profiles", The New Yorker, January 22, 1966 (Vol. 41), pp. 39-40.
4 Barbara Bader, American Picturebooks from "Noah's Ark" to "The Beast Within". New York: Macmillan, 1976; p. 1.
5 Walter Lorraine. "An Interview with Maurice Sendak", Wilson Library Bulletin, October 1977 (Vol. 52, No. 2), pp. 152-7.

hispanic films, hispanic kids

a report from chicago by susan delson

The Chicago Children's Film Center (CCFC) is a film center for children, parents, and teachers; it serves a primarily urban audience. In addition to weekly matinees, the CCFC sponsors daily screenings at schools, day-care and community centers throughout Chicago. In working with classroom audiences, CCFC staff had many opportunities to use films with Hispanic children. Films specifically created for these children were, unfortunately, hard to find. They are carried mostly by small distributors, and are often poorly publicized. The films we found had generally not been evaluated by other users, and this put us in a bind: in trying to show Hispanic films to young Hispanic audiences, we risked failure since there was so little information about the films.

These experiences impressed us with the need to locate, evaluate, and document available Hispanic-orientated children's films. The result is a forty-page report entitled "Hispanic Children's Film: Toward a Viewer-Responsive Medium." Copies are available for $2.00 each from Facets Multimedia, 1517 West Fullerton Avenue, Chicago IL 60614.

We had a good idea of what we wanted to find out -- which films for Hispanic kids actually worked best with them; what, if anything, seemed to be missing from available films; and what should new films be about? The big question was how?

Staff time for research was limited. The National Endowment for the Humanities/Youth Project funding grant was modest. And, based on previous experience, we thought the number of films available for testing would be minimal.

But a major factor in deciding on how to proceed was that, with a severe lack of evaluative research in this area, it was important to get something done. We were interested in a point of departure, not a definitive statement. We wanted a project that wouldn't bog down from too broad a scope or too complicated a design. A small study seemed appropriate.

With the above considerations in mind, we chose four audiences to work with and twenty films to evaluate. The test groups met our criteria of being predominantly Hispanic, bilingual, and ranging in age from three to twelve years old. The films, chosen to include as in

clusive a sampling as possible of Hispanic-oriented children's entertainment, were selected. They varied from three minutes to feature length, with release dates as recent as 1978 and as old as the early fifties. We were looking not only at the films, but at any trends among them.

Some films were located through distributor information. Others came through film programmers, Hispanic educational and research organizations, and Hispanic media producers and educators. Only films available through normal rental channels were considered; teaching aids and educational materials were excluded.

A Practical Approach

Four audiences and twenty films is manageable, statistically, using audience questionnaires and other research tools. For several reasons, however, we rejected "hard" data gathering.

First, past experience in showing films to children taught us that conditions vary, not only from audience to audience, but from screening to screening with the same group. Factors such as attendance levels, physical setting, audience mood, pre-screening activities, and the selection and arrangement of films within the program, all affect audience response to a particular film. Classroom screenings are not ideal laboratory situations.

Assessing a film's impact on children is another problem. We've found that children may react negatively, at first, to a film that makes them uncomfortable or provokes thought, only to mention or request it weeks or months later. Furthermore, yes/no questions needed to gather quantitative data fail to measure children's reactions in more than the simplest terms.

The films themselves pose a serious problem for statistical research. It's difficult to categorize them coherently, particularly so as to make film-to-film comparisons valuable. (Given that two films are narrative in structure, does the researcher determine which is more narrative? Do children have the same perceptions? How does one determine whether narrative structure is the factor responsible for a film's success or failure with child audiences?) The issues included in, and categorizations required for, quantitative research seemed for us beyond resolution. More importantly, a quantitative approach would not answer our questions; not only did we want to know which films worked better than others, but why.

We came to this particular project after years of evaluating children's films for our own programming information. Typically our evaluations include our own impressions, and the opinions of teachers and supervisors, but they are based primarily on children's reactions as observed by Chicago Children's Film Center staff. We look at such indicators as kids' focus on-screen, appropriate and enthusiastic responses to plot development (in narrative films), and comments during and after the film. As we return to classrooms over a period of months, we're able to gauge further impact from requests and references to past favorites. While this method is essentially subjective, under adequate screening conditions, it provided us with the most useful means of identifying the films our audiences liked best and felt most strongly about.

We decided to evaluate the Hispanic films through a similar method which is outlined in detail in the published study. The primary elements are our observation of children during and after each film, and a combination of discussion and art activities following the screenings. Older children, who were shown several longer films, were given the option of voting for or against continuing at each reel change. They were also encouraged to comment on the films as they watched.

This kind of data gathering has one great advantage -- it doesn't support over-generalizations. Included in the finished report is a detailed profile of each audience group, including age, demographics, screening conditions, and how the screenings were integrated into the children's curriculum. This provides readers with a basis for comparison to their own screening situations. Application of the report, particularly as a filmography, is left to the user.

Some Clear Needs

In addition, we have drawn some initial conclusions from the research. While some of the findings were not entirely unexpected, they are now supported by documented research.

Our most significant finding is that there aren't enough films featuring Hispanic children. While this may be said of other minorities as well (see "Minority Kids -- A Programming Dilemma," by the author, Young Viewers, Vol. 1, No. 4, Summer 1978), good films for and about Hispanic children are far too rare.

Rarer still are films featuring Hispanic girls in the main role. While a lack of female protagonists is consistent in all children's media, it's particularly marked here. Many films had no girl characters at all. In several, the only women are the main characters' mothers, and these portrayals are usually one-dimensional, inaccurate reflections of the current social status of women. (This isn't surprising, considering that only a fraction of the films were released after 1970.) If, as we believe, the selection is representative of what is available, then the bulk of Hispanic-oriented children's films are not recent enough to encompass present attitudes toward women and minorities, in particular, and toward children in general.

Children and teachers alike commented on the films' consistent emphasis on poverty and hardship. Teachers viewed it as a serious detriment, and older children, particularly, reacted with impatience and annoyance. However, conspicuous affluence is not the necessary alternative; less emphasis on material circumstances altogether might address audience interests more directly.

In conducting the study we also found a distinction between urban and rural sensibilities. Our audiences were urban; many films took place in rural settings. Older children were often reluctant to identify with these rural characters (a bias which may affect the study's usefulness with rural audiences). While we have no information about their reactions, it is probable that rural children may be more familiar with urban settings through television and other media, and therefore more able to identify with urban characters than urban children can with rural characters.

Although most of our findings concentrated on Hispanic children as a specific interest group, some of our conclusions reached beyond ethnic background. Not surprisingly, the needs of various age groups differed, and the most successful films were usually age-specific. The report includes criteria we developed for the films preferred by each age level.

As with all audiences, we found that to succeed with Hispanic children, the films had to be good. Ethnic emphasis couldn't save any film which, through poor technique, inappropriate tone, or poor character/plot development, failed to meet standards of good filmmaking. Although not a direct conclusion of the research, we strongly believe that the best films in the study are valuable films for children of all backgrounds. Perhaps the project's major impact will be in encouraging film users and producers to take more well-informed risks with Hispanic-oriented children's films. Hopefully this project is only a beginning.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

"The Council Chamber" by Edward Burne Jones

playing with film
an approach to programming

by bonnie levinson

I once asked a group of children what they did when they visited a museum. "Nothing," one of the kids replied. "Nothing?," I asked. "Have you ever been to an art museum before?"

"Yup, we been here before, walked halfway 'round the place. Walk and look. Walk, walk, walk. Look and walk."

That telling exchange occurred when I first came to work at the Delaware Art Museum, a small museum with a collection that includes Pre-Raphaelite paintings, illustrations by Howard Pyle, the Wyeth family, and the Brandywine School, as well as contemporary art and photography. The children's reply defined the problem of my job as museum educator and challenged me to give those young peripatetics a more significant and exciting museum experience.

One of my most successful endeavors involved using film with related arts activities both to communicate the collection and to familiarize children with the range of expression available to them in "the arts." It began as a logical outgrowth of my Discovery Tours, an education program for school groups.[1] Discovery Tours were quite successful, but I wanted to do more -- I was still looking for a way to bridge the gap between what the museum is and what the children have in common with it. Film programming appealed to me for several reasons. For one thing, children are familiar and comfortable with the medium, and I felt it would be an accessible educational tool. I was confident that film could be, and in fact was, an appropriate means to help children develop a sensitivity to the arts. But films could also meet a very tangible need, since I wanted to offer the community -- particularly children, an audience the museum was only beginning to reach -- an alternative to television's Saturday morning cartoons. Film programs could be more exciting, more appropriate, and more participatory than anything television could offer.

The Saturday morning film screenings were conceived as a non school extension of my Discovery Tours; however, they involved a less formal, more flexible format. Since my objectives were to encourage children to develop confidence in their perceptions and in their own powers of self-expression, some arts activities were incorporated -- along with gallery games -- into the program.

The first Saturday Film Festival ran weekly from March through May of 1978. It was announced in the local Wilmington papers as well as in the museum's membership bulletin. Each program was scheduled to last about one hour, including screening several films and doing a related follow-up activity. Programs were held in a large gallery room where mostly everyone sat on the carpet. Screenings were open to the public and free to children, with a minimum fee of fifty cents for non-member adults. My intended audience was children from age three through twelve, but since there was no pre-registration, I never knew if 15 or 150 kids would attend.

The First Series of Film Screenings

Program fliers instructed participants to bring their own crayons to the initial screening. After watching CURIOUS GEORGE RIDES A BIKE, ALEXANDER AND THE CAR WITH THE MISSING HEADLIGHT, and THE DAY THE COLORS WENT AWAY, thirty-five children (ranging in age from three to twelve) created backdrops for movies they would like to make. The activity involved the children in using familiar things (their own crayons, paper, and scissors) in a way which promoted interaction and creativity.

The next program included the film NORMAN THE DOORMAN. For those of you who may not know Norman, he is the mouse doorman for an art museum. The film served as an excellent lead-in for discussing what a museum is, what visitors can and cannot do there, and what they might find there. In order to emphasize what visitors can do in a museum, we played a perception game in which each child picked a partner. After observing each other for a minute or so, partners were instructed to turn back to back and change something minor about the way they looked. They were then asked to turn face to face and take turns guessing what had been changed.

In another variation of the same perception game, the leader is visually examined by the group. Once the children have spent a few minutes studying the leader, s/he hides both hands and asks, "How many rings do I have on?" Some kids would groan, "Aw, we didn't look at your hands!" Others would guess three, none, four, one, and ten. After the leader has shown how many rings s/he is wearing, the group should discuss why the exercise is difficult. In a sense, this game is a challenge to the group and a clear demonstration that they have to look in order to see. But the game[2] is also a wonderful opportunity for the docent/leader to explain her or his role as focuser of the museum visit.

The following week, we became involved in reading different mediums. First we read two books by Maurice Sendak, Where the Wild Things Are and Really Rosie; then we watched the films developed from those books and talked about illustrations. After that, we read some illustrations by Howard Pyle and N. C. Wyeth which are in the museum's collection. Reading the illustrations involved using the visual images to create our own stories.

As the screenings evolved past the introductory stages we moved more and more into the galleries. The Red Tour, the fourth session, was the highlight of the series. Kids were told, in advance, to wear red to the Saturday screening. This seemed to be a good device for introducing them to the many uses of red, especially in Pyle's illustrations, as well as to the many possible meanings of red.

Ninety-eight children showed up for the Red Tour -- everyone, including me, dressed from head to toe in reds. I asked the group, "How many shades of red are there?" Everyone looked around. Answers ranged from three to 88 to 7,689,549,853. After much discussion we watched THE RED BALLOON and followed the screening by floating through the museum's collection of Pyle's paintings while holding inflated red balloons. Kids were instructed to lead their parents on the hunt for red and help them learn to see. We discussed what red meant to them ("Fire," "Hot," "Blood," "Scarey," "Heart," "Love") and how it made them feel ("Strong," "Fierce," Mad"); then we discussed how and why Howard Pyle used red in particular paintings.

THE LITTLE MERMAID was screened at the next session and then children were told to find the museum's mermaid and sit down in front of it. (When kids lead the exploration -- rather than following my lead -- and find a painting on their own, they begin the inquiry with a sense of accomplishment.) Once we had all assembled in front of Pyle's painting of "The Mermaid," children identified images that were used in both the film and the painting. Next, we discussed how the two were similar, and how they were different. Kids found details and asked questions I had never considered as we discussed interpretation. They talked about the difference between the colors in the film and those in the painting, and how color, "body language," and texture affect the mood and the feeling. They even created new endings for the story from the painting.

The seventh program involved a similar one-to-one relationship between a film and a painting. After screening THE SLEEPING BEAUTY, BRIER ROSE, children found Edward Burne Jones' "The Council Chamber." The painting shows a scene from the fairytale in which the kingdom is frozen and everyone is asleep. The inquiry and exchange were fantastic. In response to "Tell me how long the people in the picture have been asleep and explain how you can tell," some children said it had been a long time because the brier was all overgrown; others said it had been a short time because the brier roses were blooming. Debate continued and the activity climaxed with kids acting out the story and creating a tableau by assuming the positions of the people in the painting. In order to do this, they first had to study the composition, texture, and weight communicated through colors in the painting.

The series ended with a Full Color Day for which everyone was asked to wear as many colors as possible. When the vividly colored participants arrived, we discussed the colors in the rainbow and then saw ORANGE AND BLUE, LITTLE BLUE AND LITTLE YELLOW, PATRICK, and PAINTINGS. After that, we played color games in the galleries. Kids split into small groups and were instructed to find what they thought was the most colorful painting. One group chose Don Nice's "The Longhorn Steer: Western Series" because, they said, "Steers are usually brown, but this one has purple, pink, brown, black, blue, green, orange, peach, and turquoise." They were quite specific. Another group chose Ben Schonzeit's "Rhubarb" which is a large-scale photorealistic painting of the red stalked plant. "There are a lot more colors than just red in the rhubarb," kids told me; "Look, there's purple, white, black, green, and orange." Both groups said they picked paintings they thought most people wouldn't have picked; apparently they wanted to show me what good lookers they were.

A Slight Change of Focus

So far, the screenings had been a great success. All told, six-hundred and ninety-six people (mostly children) attended the seven screenings and there were many requests for the program to continue. But in planning the fall series, I wanted to involve children more directly and more intensively in the artistic process. It was obvious that films could energize and inspire kids, but arts activities helped them personally connect to the esthetic experience -- and, through their own creative self-expression, they could relate to the films and to the museum's collection with more depth and more variety. (The filmography which is included in the next issue of Young Viewers has details about the films which were screened.)

When the second series was nearly over and I was in the midst of planning the next, I began to understand the possibilities of programming. I also came to four very liberating discoveries. Number one was that everything did not have to relate specifically to the collection and that my goals did not have to be blatantly obvious. Number two was that the screenings did not have to be limited to so-called children's films; some which were not specifically created for children could work very well with young viewers. Number three was that the most creative and successful programs were ones which involved risks; the Red Tour is a prime example since the connections between the concept, the activity, and the film, THE RED BALLOON, were intuitive and very subtle, but the program succeeded beyond my expectations. Number four was that programs didn't always work; in fact, they hardly ever work the way one expects them to, so it helped to have a flexible, experimental attitude about programming -- playful may be the best way to describe it.

Adding Elements

Drama, dance, music, and poetry had always been important resources for me as a museum educator; not just because of commonalities in vocabulary among them and the visual arts, but because these other modes help children experience esthetic awareness directly through motion, sound, and space. So, since my overall goal was to help children to perceive fully, I decided to include as many other arts media as possible in the third film series. In order to do this, I enlisted the help of artists from the Artists-in-the-Schools program which is co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Delaware Arts Council. I collaborated with the artists in planning the programs and developing the activities; they were fabulous resources!

The third series began as the first had, that is, children were instructed to bring their own crayons to the museum. Crayons were something familiar they could bring into a new environment; they were something of themselves they could share with new friends. After seeing SIX PENGUINS, THE THREE ROBBERS, and MADELINE, participants created a group mural. Those who came back the following week found their mural hanging in the museum.

The third session involved a movement activity. After we screened THE SNEETCHES, NIGHT PEOPLE'S DAY, and GLASS, kids used their bodies to create noisy machines -- experiencing motion and rhythm as modes of expression. The group was instructed to invent a machine with "working parts" by attaching their bodies to each other and moving mechanically while their voices made appropriate machine noises and sounds. After that, we went to look at Calder's 'Black Crescent," a mobile sculpture with crescent discs which are set in motion by air currents. The sculpture served as an inspiration for even more wonderful machines, but the initial machine construction and the films had set the stage for this to happen.

The next session, a special poetry workshop with Molly Peacock, involved no motion pictures. Kids made group and individual poems after seeing an exhibit of Gertrude Kasebeir's photographs of Indians from the early 1900's. The following week parents and volunteers helped children do drawing, mapmaking, and acting out activities after seeing HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION and SAND (OR PETER AND THE WOLF).

The seventh session involved an exploration of what puppets could be as well as what could be puppets. Puppeteer Debra Frasier, filmmaker Dan Bailey, and I used everything from hand puppets, to rod puppets, string puppets, and found objects. Bailey's film, THE LATE GREAT AMERICAN PICNIC, uses giant billboard cutouts as puppets and it gave me the idea of incorporating an exploration of scale into the program.

Pop Eye, a New York City boutique specializing in large-scale pop art objects, loaned the museum several colossal Crayola crayons, a gigantic paintbrush, a humungous harmonica, and a massive matchbox with two-foot long matches. Debra, Dan, and I used these objects, along with Debra's soft-sculpture puppets, in both pre- and post-screening dramatic sketches to explore the notion of scale as a question of relativity and expectation. A four-foot crayon is not unusual or even colossal unless one has an expectation that crayons are four inches long. So, what size is the right size? From this question we moved on to consider how artists use scale in their work, and what altering the scale of an object does. The group discussed Ben Schonzeit's "Rhubarb," Alan Kessler's "Geranium," Jack Beal's "Love Seat with Purple Background," and other large-scale works in the contemporary collection.

Putting Things in Perspective

Evaluating the success of a program is a complex process. During the 1979 summer film series, for example, the kids saw FIRE in conjunction with an exploration of a special temporary exhibit called "Tenth Street Days" which consisted of works by early abstract expressionists in New York City during the 1950's. FIRE uses an impasto paint technique and participants were asked to create their own impasto paintings after seeing the film and touring the gallery. While kids claimed that they did not like the film, their follow-up activity (which involved exploring the technique, spontaneity, and creative possibilities of applying thick paint) demonstrated that the film had helped them to see in ways they were not cognitively aware of.

Children are very quick to say they don't like a film if it is strange or in any way unusual, and asking "Did you like the film?" is not a fruitful question. I prefer to use the non-judgmental "What do you see in your mind when you think about the film?" It serves as an effective lead-in to arts activities and works very well to inspire creative thinking. Verbal responses may also be misleading, since children can't always articulate how they feel. I actually acquire a great deal of information about kids' feelings during a screening by observing their reactions -- attentiveness, laughter, silence, restlessness, and other non-verbal body language.

Evaluation is further complicated by the fact that it is difficult to separate the films from the context in which they are used. The lead-in and follow-up activities, and the actual space you work in, affect the success of a screening. Seemingly unrelated or insignificant things can have an amazing impact. Kids get really excited about simple things, such as bringing in their own crayons from home, bringing in homemade musical instruments, or dressing all in red. But, the incredible thing about using film as a stimulus to the sort of educational activities I've described is that film can provide an environment -- and a particular combination of films

can create an all embracing mood -- which works better than would seem logical. Such combinations have succeeded beyond my highest hopes, they have succeeded in inspiring children to understand and to create art by engaging their senses in a comprehensive, experiential way.

An Evaluation of Sorts

Having just completed the fifth film series, I feel very positive about the overall impact of using film in a museum. But the greatest reward is that now there are children who feel comfortable there. They look forward to visiting the galleries and relate to the paintings as old friends.

A few Saturdays ago, a new front desk receptionist was asking where all those kids were going. She was curious about what children were doing in a museum -- particularly since they didn't stop at the desk to ask for directions. "Excuse me," she asked a child, "is this your first visit here?"

"Nope," the child replied, "I come every Saturday."

"Do you like the museum?," the receptionist continued.

"Yeah, it's great!"

"What do you do when you come here?"

"We have fun. We watch films, look at art, and make things."

I don't know about you, but I wouldn't ask for more.

[1] Discovery Tours were designed as participatory learning experiences. During a tour, I would use inquiry and games (such as storytelling, acting out, role playing, body movement, creative writing, and various perception games) to stimulate children's curiosity and direct their explorations of works of art. The tours used the museum as a setting for esthetic education; they were important catalysts for learning in a very broad sense, because the skills and attitudes the children develop in actively perceiving works of art also reinforce or help motivate the development of perception and communication skills which form the basis for acquiring knowledge in the humanities and the sciences. While the children were observing and interpreting pictures, they were also collecting data and analyzing information by both deduction and induction. They were cooperating in activities, and becoming aware of themselves and others in the group. Moreover, kids were improving their comprehension and their ability to discuss the nature, lifestyles, and values of other peoples and other times in relation to their own.

[2] There are countless games that can be incorporated into an education program. "London Bridge Is Falling Down", for example, can be used to teach children about arches and the principle of stress in building. It is very important, however, that the games be appropriate to the collection, or to the particular aspect of the collection that you are trying to communicate. They can be exciting and effective tools, but games must be more than busy work.

Ms. Levinson's annotated filmography will appear in the next issue of Young Viewers. The article itself has been reprinted, with permission of the publisher, from What To Do When The Lights Go On: A Comprehensive Guide to 16mm Films and Related Activities for Children. Written by Maureen Gaffney and Gerry Laybourne, the book is available from Oryx Press, 2214 North Central Avenue, Phoenix AZ 85004, for $12.50 paperbound and $18.50 clothbound.

(DiPerna's Filmography, continued from page 15.)

Extraordinary Stories

CECILY by Pavla Reznickova, 7 min
(Learning Corporation of America, NYC)
BAD DOG by Eli Noyes & Claudia Weill, 7 min
(Unifilm, NYC)
HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION by Tom Davenport, 16 min (Davenport Films, Delaplane VA)
THE FABLE OF HE AND SHE by Eli Noyes, 11 min
(Learning Corporation of America)
LE POULET by Claude Berri, 15 min
(Films Incorporated, Wilmette IL)

Outstanding Documentaries

UNDERCURRENTS by Robin Lehman, 12 min
(Phoenix Films)
KEVIN ALEC by Beverly Shaffer, 16 min
(Media Guild, Solana Beach CA)
NIGHT PEOPLE'S DAY by Bob Kurtz, 11 min
(FilmFair Communications, Studio City CA)
CHEETAH by Peter & Jane Chermayeff, 11 min
(Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation)
TRIKFILM III by George Griffin, 4 min
(Serious Business Company)

PROGRAMMING SEMINAR

Anita Bassey's Program

FULL FATHOM FIVE by Ken Rudolph, 7 min
(Pyramid Films, Santa Monica CA)
CANON by Norman McLaren & Grant Munro, 9 min
(International Film Bureau, Chicago IL)
SUMMER RENDEZVOUS by Jacques Ertaud, 30 min
(Universal Education & Visual Arts, Universal City CA)

Susan Delson's Program

PETS: A BOY AND HIS DOG by Gabor Kalman, 11 min
(BFA Educational Media, Santa Monica CA)
FLAT FLIP FLIES STRAIGHT by Dallas Garred, 4 min
(Films Incorporated)
A VISIT FROM SPACE by Zlatko Grgic, 11 min
(Samu Productions, East Brunswick NJ)

Richard Gaugert's Program

RUSSIAN ROOSTER by Steve Segal, 4 min
(Perspective Films, Chicago IL)
THE FOOLISH FROG by Gene Deitch, 8 min
(Weston Woods Studios, Weston CT)
THE CONCERT by Claude Chagrin, 12 min
(Pyramid Films)
CECILY by Pavla Reznickova, 7 min
(Learning Corporation of America)
FLY AWAY by Robin Lehman, 12 min
(Phoenix Films)
KUUMBA: SIMON'S NEW SOUND by Bob Bloomberg & Jane Aaron, 8 min (Beacon Films, Norwood MA)

Films for Evaluation

MINDSCAPE by Jacques Drouin, 8 min
(Pyramid Films)
THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE by Caroline Leaf, 8 min (Bosustow Productions)
BOASTING by Ali Akbar Sadeghi, 11 min
(Paramount Communications, Los Angeles CA)
HOMAGE A FRANCOIS COUPERIN by Phillip Stapp, 2 min (International Film Foundation, NYC)

museum film programs, a proper balance

by deirdre boyle

More than forty museum educators gathered at the Media Center for Children (MCC) in November 1979 for an intensive three-day workshop on programming films for children in museums. Introductions around the room quickly revealed that many were ambivalent about using film. Andrew Ackerman, Director of Education for New York City's Jewish Museum, expressed some reservations about using film "as opposed to objects or teachers". For others, film had been used mainly for promotion. Eleanor Chin, Manager of the Boston Children's Museum, commented that she had never included film in special events programming, but she had used film to raise attendance on weekends.

If It's Not On The Walls, It's My Job

Not everyone was a reluctant film user. Richard Gaugert, Program Coordinator for the St. Louis Art Museum, talked exuberantly about his film program. Begun five years ago, the forty-five minute Saturday film sessions proved so popular that the museum recently expanded them to an hour and moved the screenings to Sunday afternoon.

Gaugert mentioned three of his programming objectives. The first, what he calls the Grand Esthetic, involves exposing children to film as a visual art medium and as an exciting sensual experience. "I don't use film to interpret exhibits," he explained. "I'm a film curator; I'm doing the same thing as other curators."

His second aim is to find ways to expand a child's growing capacity to see the world. Referring to child development theories, Gaugert noted that a child's ability to register stimulation changes as she or he develops. Programmers must understand that children's reactions are often based on their developmental stages. He cited the film, THE MARBLE, as an example ; he found that it works well with older children but not with younger ones since they cannot yet handle image distortion.

"My audience is four to ten-year olds," he said. The challenge for me is putting together a program, ranging from the highly sensory to the abstract, that appeals to children at different ages." He writes program notes for parents or an older sibling because he believes they cannot be written for an age span of four to ten. The notes are meant as cues and serve as a supplement to the live introduction he gives at the beginning of each program. Gaugert remains with the audience, watches for reactions, and talks with individuals later to find out what they liked. This personal, informal observation is his evaluation tool.

Gaugert's third objective is to offer families unique and stimulating Sunday afternoon activities. "I don't want to be in an auditorium alone with 400 kids," he said. "I want the parents to share the films with their children; I have to select films that adults will be able to enjoy."

When selecting a program, Gaugert may start with the children's page of a distributor's catalog, but he doesn't stop there. For example, his winter program on portraits featured only one film made for children, a documentary portrait of Dexter Maxwell from ALONE IN THE FAMILY. With it, he programmed an experimental documentary (FRENCH LUNCH), a personal vision film (NOTES ON A CIRCUS), and two films made for art's sake (ORANGE and FACE DANCE), all of which he showed at the workshop. He explained that this sort of variety was stimulating for parents as well as for children.

Gaugert noted that he always plans a program denouement for each screening. After intensive stimulation, children can be brought down gently with a calming image/sound combination. He likens the effect to that produced by traditional "and they lived happily ever after" folk and fairytale endings. "Parents will love you for this," he noted wryly.

Gaugert attributes much of the success of the Sunday programs to his belief in "the marriage of program and promotion". He gets regular feedback from the museum's public information office, which runs ads for the film series in the press and places posters in toy stores and in the children's sections of bookstores and libraries. Asked whether the museum advertised film programs via the schools, he answered that the information did not seem to reach kids that way; instead, he sends notices to church groups and community centers.

What I'm About To Tell You Is Not Necessarily True

Nat Johnson, also an enthusiastic film programmer, is Education Coordinator for the People Center at the American Museum of Natural History. Open on weekends, the center uses live demonstrations, films, and slides to convey the basics of anthropology to approximately 1200 visitors each week. Three carpeted terraces and a mini-theater (which accomodates eighty people for each half-hour program) make up the center.

Johnson reported that folklore is one of the most successful genres at the People Center because it reaches both children and adults. Then, to demonstrate a typical film and storytelling session, he pulled on an Ashanti cloak. "What I'm about to tell you is not necessarily true," he began, introducing the African trickster figure Anansi. Johnson interwove stories with films, showing THE MAGIC TREE, based on an African legend, and BAD, BAD LEROY BROWN, a contemporary Black-American trickster hero.

Chu Chu La Manga

After a long afternoon spent screening films and listening to presentations, the audience visibly re-energized as chairs were pushed against walls and shoes were kicked off for Laurie Meadoff's movement improvisations. Meadoff, Artistic Director for New York University's Creative Arts Team (CAT), uses mime, dance, and music to expand the themes of films. She encourages young people to express how films relate to their own lives.

Meadoff showed THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE, an Inuit-inspired film by Caroline Leaf. This poignant black and white sand animation tells the story of an owl who falls in love with a goose. Their goslings -- half goose, half owl -- swim with their mother as the land-bound father paces along the water's edge. When autumn comes, the family migrates; but upon landing in the water, owl plummets into the deep, sinking and reemerging. The goose swims over and speaks with him in an evocative Inuit dialogue. Finally, the goose swims off with her goslings and the owl sinks below the surface of the water.

When the film ended, Meadoff began an improv with chanting. Workshop participants, clustered on the carpeted floor, repeated the unfamiliar sounds. Next, they followed her movements, eventually circling the room -- flying and flapping their wings as the birds did. Using flying and swimming motions, they strained to catch up, chanting all the while. When they floundered, Meadoff took the apparent defeat of the owl and transformed it by having the group struggle -- now swooping in low circles, now soaring upwards -- and succeed. This conclusion received a burst of applause and an excited babble of enthusiasm from those involved. Meadoff then asked everyone to verbalize the feelings they got from the film; she encouraged them to form group sculptures based on those feelings. Finally, she divided the group into four smaller units and each devised improvs on themes from the film. This produced touching, hilarious, often inventive sketches related to feelings of wanting something badly, being excluded, or being abandoned.

Connect Personally With Children

The second day of the workshop was devoted to screening and evaluation. (See filmography for the list of films.) Maureen Gaffney, Executive Director of the Media Center for Children, and Susan Delson, Programming Consultant to the Chicago Children's Film Center, helped participants develop evaluation criteria. Aspects considered included technical quality (images, sound, genre, structure, coordination of technique to concept, pace) and content (subject, treatment, format, point of view, tone). But, clearly, program potential (audience, thematic aspects of the film, follow-up activities, other films to program with it) was the workshop's primary focus.

Gaffney warned the group not to divorce themselves from what they were watching, and urged them to connect personally with children -- not to say "I don't like this, maybe kids will". She handed out a checklist for programmers which had ten points: (1) define your programming goals -- institutionally, educationally, socially, personally, and esthetically; (2) study your audience -- watch films with them; (3) get your audience to trust you -- study them, please them, and challenge them; (4) cultivate your audience -- plan by series or season, publicize your screenings; (5) choose a theme or structure for each program -- personalize categories; (6) incorporate variety as a key ingredient in each program -- consider pace, technique, genre, and dynamics; (7) chart a graph for each program before and after screening it with kids -- compare what you thought would happen with what actually happened; (8) use the specialness of the film medium; (9) take risks -- the worst you can do is bore or confuse your audience; (10) take film programming seriously -- work at it, evaluate your programs, share information with fellow programmers -- but have some fun as you do it.

What Is A Museum?

Creativity and energy continued into the workshop's final day. Participants brought five tiny treasured objects and five picture post cards from home. Bonnie Levinson, Education Coordinator for the Delaware Art Museum (whose approach to programming is explained in another article in this issue), asked everyone to display their treasures and determine the essence of their "collection". She asked participants to consider how they might interpret their collection through film and related activities. Gaffney recommended they define their audience, then structure their program in terms of their goals, choose the films, and develop two or three possible activities. Levinson added that the films must be able to stand on their own as well as relate to the museum's collection.

Some worked alone; others pooled their collections, grouping in twos and threes. Films (chosen from among the fifty shown during the three days) were not actually screened for the simulated programs, which were half-demonstrated, half-described.

Two museum educators presented the first program. They planned a ninety-minute session for twelve to sixteen preschoolers and their parents. After an exploratory game using blindfolds, feathers were handed out. After the (would be) screening of THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE in the activities room, everyone "flew" into the gallery with feathers in hand to look at the museum's collection, which included a stone owl and a fish. The educators handed around magic glasses -- wire frames without lenses; whoever wore them could tell what they saw. Finally the group "swam" back to the activities room where they found boxes of material with which to create their own habitats.

Participants applauded the use of the film as program catalyst, but some felt there was a marked difference between the activities room experience and the gallery experience. The presenters considered projecting slides of objects from the collection onto the walls of the activities room to serve as a bridge to draw the children into the gallery environment. One participant commented that the magic glasses were not necessary since the feathers alone would succeed in opening the children's imaginations.

The next simulated program was developed by the staff of a "museum with a large collection". The curatorial team planned a forty-five minute program for eleven to fourteen year olds. Three films opened the session, ELEPHANT, FACE DANCE, and THIS IS YOUR MUSEUM SPEAKING. A studio instructor introduced the concept of portraits -- of oneself, one's friends, pets, houses, even objects that weren't real. He asked what the three films had in common and whether all were portraits. He then talked about how objects can be symbols for people, such as Reggie Jackson's baseball jersey or George Washington's wig and coat. The group's assignment was to assemble a collage portrait (thus solving the problem for those who "can't draw") of anyone or anything.

The studio instructor's partner picked up the theme from the last film, THIS IS YOUR MUSEUM SPEAKING. Standing in the gallery, she tried to explain why a museum is special and what distinguishes art in a museum from one's own treasures. Here, however, the second program broke down; the use of the first two films to stimulate collage portraits was praised by the group, but the use of the third film was criticized since the curator had not integrated it into her gallery talk and had planned no follow-up activity. Her approach seemed to widen the gap

between museum collections and children, instead of bridging it.

Interestingly, the same three films were selected by another team for Faces and Frames, a program for a small group of eight to ten-year-olds. The curators passed out second-line portraits (ones children could touch) and discussed the concept of framing in each. FACE DANCE, THIS IS YOUR MUSEUM SPEAKING, and ELEPHANT were shown and discussion focused on how film frames work. Breaking into groups of four, participants created their own faces in a frame, using anything in the room -- chair legs, for example -- to create living framed portraits.

Once again participants praised the creative use of the films; however, some criticized both portrait programs for using more films than necessary, since over-programming may undermine the children's ability to make connections. Fewer films may also make it easier to look at film as art.

One of the final presentations was a program on proportion for ten year olds, scheduled as a special Sunday morning event. It featured two films, THE LATE GREAT AMERICAN PICNIC and THE INCREDIBLE SAN FRANCISCO ARTISTS' SOAPBOX DERBY. Follow-up discussions centered on big and little things and what makes objects interesting or strange. Using outsized and undersized objects (a four foot-pencil and a six-inch tent), the programmers discussed scale and its relationship to one's expectations of an object. Then participants, divided into four groups, were asked to design outlandish objects -- galoshes for an elephant, ski boots for an ostrich, etc. Once specifications were given, the groups (would have) had to solve their own problems and create objects out of the materials provided.

This program received universal acclaim for the appropriate and clever juxtaposition of the two films (which do stand on their own), and for the stimulating follow-up activity that heightened the concepts learned from the films. It was a model of the well-integrated film/arts activity program.

The End of Phase One

The workshop had been an active, process oriented experience. Participants became familiar with a common language for evaluation and encountered stimulating ideas for using film. They had an opportunity to view a number of films they could incorporate into future programs, and each one carried away an offset copy of MCC's latest publication, What To Do When The Lights Go On, which was designed to serve as a resource for other ideas and other films.

The workshop, supported in part by both the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts, concluded the first phase of a larger, National Endowment for the Arts funded, pilot project involving selected museums around the country and in New York State. Gaffney explained that participating museums would receive films from MCC later in the year. Museum educators, applying the information acquired during the workshop, would evaluate films with children at their own sites. Their collaboration with MCC will help develop creative and more effective film programs for children in museums nationwide.

Like Fingerprints...

Enthusiasm was high as people left to return to their institutions, located primarily in the East. (MCC gave a similar West Coast workshop, coordinated by Linda Artel, at the University Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley in early December.)

As the final day's programming jam session indicated, the varied aims of the different institutions, their audiences, and the unique styles, interests, and talents of museum educators will influence the programs they develop. Like fingerprints, no two programs will be exactly the same.

Filmography: Museum Film Programs

ALLIGATORS ALL AROUND, 2 min (Weston Woods Studios, Weston CT)
ALONE IN THE FAMILY, 12 min (Films Incorporated, Wilmette IL)
AMANITA, 9 min (Pyramid Films, Santa Monica CA)
BAD, BAD LEROY BROWN, 3 min (View Finders, Box 1665, Evanston IL 60204)
BIGHORN, 10 min (National Film Board of Canada, NYC)
THE BRONZE ZOO, 16 min (Texture Films, NYC)
CANON, 9 min (International Film Bureau, Chicago IL)
THE CHAMPION, 16 min (Brown/Nutshell Productions, 196 Mott Street, New York NY 10012)
COLOR FILM #3, 3 min (American Federation of Arts, NYC)
A COLOUR BOX, 5 min (Museum of Modern Art, NYC)
DANCE ON A MAY DAY, 12 min (Learning Corporation of America, NYC)
ELEPHANT, 11 min (Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation, Chicago IL)
FACE DANCE, 5 min (Serious Business Co, Oakland CA)
FIRE, 9 min (Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corp)
FRENCH LUNCH, 15 min (American Federation of Arts)
FURIES, 3 min (Creative Film Society, Reseda CA)
GLITTERING SONG, 12 min (Not in distribution now)
HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION, 16 min (Davenport Films, Delaplane VA)
HOMAGE A FRANCOIS COUPERIN, 2 min (International Film Foundation, NYC)
I'LL FIND A WAY, 26 min (Media Guild, Solana Beach CA)
IMPASSE, 10 min (Phoenix Films, NYC)
THE INCREDIBLE SAN FRANCISCO ARTIST'S SOAPBOX DERBY, 24 min (Phoenix Films)
IN PLAIN SIGHT, 3 min (Serious Business Company)
ISLE OF JOY, 7 min (Perspective Films, Chicago IL)
KISHA'S SONG, 3 min (Family Communications, Pittsburgh PA)
L'AGE DOOR, 2 min (Serious Business Company)
THE LATE GREAT AMERICAN PICNIC, 7 min (Bailey Films, 32 Owls Nest Road, Centerville DE 19807)
LEGEND, 15 min (National Film Board of Canada)
THE LEGEND OF JOHN HENRY, 11 min (Pyramid Films)
LUMAAQ: AN ESKIMO LEGEND, 7 min (National Film Board of Canada)
THE MAGIC TREE, 10 min (Texture Films)
MATTHEW, YOUR MOTHER IS CALLING YOU, 9 min (Films Incorporated)
NATURE MORTE AUX FRUITS, 2 min (Perspective Films)
A NIGHT ON BALD MOUNTAIN, 8 min (Creative Film Society)
NOTES ON A CIRCUS, 11 min (American Federation of Arts)
NOVEMBER 1977, 3 min (Susan Rubin Films, 514 West 114th Street, New York NY 10025)
ORANGE, 3 min (Serious Business Company)
THE OWL WHO MARRIED A GOOSE, 8 min (Stephen Bosustow Productions, Santa Monica CA)
PENCIL BOOKLINGS, 14 min (Serious Business Co)
THE PRESENCE, 3 min (Film-maker's Cooperative, NYC)
ROON ABOUT, 3 min (Family Communications)
SAIL AWAY, 17 min (Arthur Mokin Productions, NYC)
SANDMAN, 4 min (Unifilm, NYC)
STILL LIFE, 5 min (Film-makers' Cooperative)
THE STONECUTTER, 6 min (Weston Woods Studios)
SUN FLIGHT, 6 min (Gerald McDermott Films, Box 334, New Milford CT 06776)
THIS IS YOUR MUSEUM SPEAKING, 16 min (National Film Board of Canada)
TRANSFER, 10 min (Durst Films, 171 First Avenue, New York NY 10028)
VERY PLUSH, 1 min (Amtrak Commercial)

Note: We have listed the complete addresses of only those distributors which may be difficult to locate.

something for everyone family films and children's programming

by paula di perna

The Seminar on Programming, the 1979 midwinter conference of the Media Center for Children, was distinguished by at least one external factor -- it was held in New York City during the heaviest snowfall of the year. Yet, 13½ inches of snow notwithstanding, the "show" went indubitably, and very successfully, on.

The conference was held February 18 and 19, at the American Museum of Natural History and the Ethical Culture Society. There were plenty of movies, and plenty of movie talk, with plenty of children and adults doing both the talking and the seeing.

On Sunday afternoon, February 18, the Media Center sponsored a Family Film Festival at the Museum of Natural History, a great cavernous building overlooking Central Park. Two thousand viewers eventually found their way through the Hall of North American mammals to the first floor auditorium where the program was divided into Animation Delights, Extraordinary Stories, and Outstanding Documentaries. Snow had been predicted, so there were boots and scarves and heavy coats to be taken on and off, but eventually the audience settled quite happily into viewing.

A special feature of the festival was the participation of several filmmakers whose work was being screened in the programs. According to Maureen Gaffney, director of the Media Center for Children, the purpose of the Family Film Festival was to "celebrate the filmmakers as much as the films . . . to put the audience in touch with the people who make the films." The presence of the filmmakers and their interaction with the audience lent the screening a quasi "star-studded" quality, yet it helped demonstrate that movies are made by real people. Their presence also suggested to the audience that viewers, both young and old, were important enough to warrant the direct attention of the artist behind the movie.

The animation series was hosted by John Canemaker and Kit Laybourne, who were masters of ceremonies through a sixty-minute program which ranged from the 1914 black and white silent classic GERTIE THE DINOSAUR, to the futuristic LUMA NOCTURNA, an evocation of color and light. The program also included 41 BARKS, a repertoire of dog drawings and accompanying barks, all drawn and barked by animator Eli Noyes, also present and co-host of the next sequence of films. Laybourne and Canemaker introduced the program, describing briefly the work of Windsor McCay, comparing his Gertie to the dinosaurs in the Natural History Museum collection. None of the animations -- there were ten in all -- ran longer than ten minutes, and the result was a cornucopia of short exchanges of visual information. Some of the films were traditionally narrative, like GERALD McBOING BOING, whose hero is a little boy with a very limited vocabulary, while others were simply beautiful to look at, like LUMA NOCTURNA and ALLEGRETTO. It fascinates me (and though I don't have children of my own, I brought along some children friends to have benefit of their opinions) that despite the varying types of film shown, and the complete mix of audience -- which included people who had come especially for the conference as well as those who drifted in from casual museum wanderings -- the audience sat, for the most part, with attention fixed on all the films. The interspersing of films with comments from Laybourne and Canemaker probably helped a lot in this regard, both to weave the program together, and to refocus the attention of the audience at the end of each film.

The next sequence, Extraordinary Stories, was probably my favorite of the day. It was hosted by Eli Noyes, the same Noyes of 41 BARKS and Tom Davenport. "Have you ever wondered how the world looks from a dog's point of view," Noyes queried the audience, as the lead to showing BAD DOG, a Noyes-Claudia Weill work, which does exactly that -- it's the life of a New York City hound seen through his eyes. Davenport introduced his liveaction HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION. The children seated in front of me, who appeared to be about twelve or thirteen, were involved in a debate about whether or not Hansel and Gretel took too big a risk by setting off alone into the forest. The issue was neatly settled when one said to the other, "Well, would you stick around if you had a mother like that?"

Again the program varied, including CECILY, the story of a young girl with fantastic large ears, as well as the drily witty LE POULET, about a young boy with an unlikely pet.

The documentary section was last, hosted by Peter Chermayeff and Beverly Shaffer. Shaffer's film, KEVIN ALEC, was narrated by the boy of the title, an Indian living on a reservation in British Columbia. Before running the movie, Shaffer described her experiences working among Kevin Alec's family, trying to film their story and customs without making them self-conscious. Chermayeff, who was represented in the film group by CHEETAH, which he directed with Jane Chermayeff, told the audience about the filming safari, watching and waiting for the cheetah for many hours to eventually capture the eleven minutes of film they were about to see.

Though the screenings ran for nearly four hours, the auditorium did not sound full of people who had been sitting too long. Instead, many people stayed on for an informal question-and-answer session with the filmmakers, including both children and their adult companions.

Of course, not every pair of eyes was riveted to every film for the entire four hours -- there was considerable drifting in and out of people -- but overall the program seemed to provide more than something for everyone.

How to strike this balance was the subject of the next day's seminar for adults whose jobs require them to use films with children -- teachers, librarians, educators, museum personnel. The seminar was held at the Ethical Culture Society, near the Natural History Museum. By Monday morning, much of the thirteen inches of snow had already fallen, and New York City had been slowed down to virtual white silence, yet inside the Ethical Culture building activity progressed quite as normal. All those who had braved both the snow and transportation problems -- sixty-three out of eighty-two preregistrants -- congratulated themselves for persistence as they found their tables for breakfast. The breakfasts were arranged according to special interests, such as how to evaluate a program, how to program in museums, programming for minorities. Each breakfast was facilitated by an experienced person in the field, and the result was solid, small group exchange among like-motivated, if not always like-minded, film programmers.

The first session addressed itself to programming for small homogenous age groups, and was led by Anita Bassey of the Brooklyn Public Library, and Susan Delson, programming consultant for the Chicago Children's Film Center. Bassey's program, aimed at six- to ten-year-olds, demonstrated a theme which reverberated through the conference: "What you do is dependent on why you are doing it." Bassey presented a group of films around the concept of movement -- musical movement, underwater movement, athletic movement -- and cautioned the audience to take all things into consideration. "Something as basic as the weather (the snow-braving audience laughed) can affect how kids react. Don't show a film about the Gobi desert on a hot day in a room with no air-conditioning. Consider the size of the screen, the size of the audience. Consider the mood you are leaving the kids with."

Delson addressed herself to programming for the three to five age group. She stressed the importance of anticipating what might confuse children of this age in film, and remarked "what bores them is what they don't understand."

After lunch, Linda Artel of Berkeley's University Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive, and Richard Gaugert of the St. Louis Art Museum, discussed programming for large family audiences. Artel advocated grouping films around a theme to "hook" the audience, though conceding that securing good films on a prescribed subject can be difficult. Gaugert emphasized programming for esthetics, underlining the distinction to be made between film as art, and film as a means to something else.

The closing session of the conference featured presentations on how to evaluate films for use with arts activities, led by Maureen Gaffney and Bonnie Levinson of the Delaware Art Museum. Gaffney alluded to the museum program the day before, emphasizing that pacing a program is extremely important. She reminded the audience that films could be tested through the Media Center, and that the Media Center was a resource for all conference attendees.

Bonnie Levinson's presentation focused on using film in museums. As a museum educator, her task is to "communicate the collection". She reported that film programs can enhance her methods considerably. She described a Red Tour of the museum, during which children picked out all the red objects they saw; she commented that the film, THE RED BALLOON, fit neatly into the tour and helped sharpen the children's sense of observation.

Both Gaffney and Levinson pointed out the complementary nature of film and arts activities, explaining that the key is to help children be flexible, to mix sensibilities and "consider what it would be like to walk into a painting, or through a wall". The film, MINDSCAPE, served as an example. A short work entitled HOMAGE A FRANCOIS COUPERIN was screened and a discussion followed about how it combined colors and music and how an activity after viewing it, using colored papers or crayons or pencils, generally produced lively and sensitive art results.

During the summation discussion all conference session leaders took questions from participants. Many were concerned about how to program effectively when faced with budget limitations, or parental interference. Several librarians referred to problems they'd had with parents who objected to the "gory details" of Davenport's HANSEL AND GRETEL, AN APPALACHIAN VERSION. Gaffney encouraged the audience to experiment and to mine the full possibility of a film. I sensed some frustration among conference attendees, who obviously wanted to develop exciting programs, but who felt restricted by the economics of their milieu, and even by attitudes of administrators who take a children's film program very much for granted. "We can't always get what we want, you know," one attendee murmured to her companion in the next seat.

In all, though there were several different styles and approaches proffered, the general purpose of the conference was to relate theories back to the practice of "real-life" programming situations such as library screenings and the film festival the day before. The combination of the two seemed extremely instructive.

I reflected on my own experience at the American Museum of Natural History screening, and considered whether or not I could objectively decide if the program had been a success for the children who had come with me. On balance, I guess there is little doubt. When I encouraged Timothy, a great wildlife enthusiast (aged seven), to go up front and chat with Peter Chermayeff about the cheetah film, he was hesitant. His reaction is one that all programmers or filmmakers should hope to achieve. "I don't think I will," he said, "because I have only one question that will be hard to answer -- why didn't he make that film longer?"

(Editor's Note: The seminar as well as the family film festival were made possible by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts.)

FAMILY FILM FESTIVAL

Animation Delights

GERTIE THE DINOSAUR by Winsor McCay, 7 min
(Museum of Modern Art, NYC)
WHAZZAT? by Arthur Pierson, 10 min
(Encyclopaedia Britannica Ed. Corp, Chicago IL)
ANIMATION SAMPLER by Kit Laybourne, 7 min segment
(Laybourne-Lemle Productions, NYC)
LUMA NOCTURNA by Dennis Pies, 4 min
(Serious Business Company, Oakland CA)
41 BARKS by Eli Noyes, 1 min (Texture Films, NYC)
FELIX THE CAT in ONE GOOD TURN by Otto Messmer,
7 min (Oriola Films Studios, NYC)
GERALD McBOING BOING by John Hubley & Bob Cannon,
7 min (Bosustow Productions, Santa Monica CA)
ALLEGRETTO by Oskar Fischinger, 5 min
(Museum of Modern Art)
SAND (PETER AND THE WOLF) by Caroline Leaf, 10 min
(Phoenix Films, NYC)
TAXI by Roland Stutz, 3 min
(National Film Board of Canada, NYC)

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contributors

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